PROVISIONAL

E/1997/SR.26
18 July 1997

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Substantive session of 1997

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 14 July 1997, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

CONTENTS

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION ON TOBACCO OR HEALTH (continued)

(d) COORDINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY (continued)

(e) JOINT AND CO-SPONSORED UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS/ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (continued)

(i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (continued)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

GE.97-62966 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Galuska (Czech Republic), Mr. Henze (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 6) (continued) (A/52/114-E/1997/46, A/52/115-E/1997/47)

(b) MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION ON TOBACCO OR HEALTH (continued) (E/1997/62)

(d) COORDINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY (continued) (A/52/175-E/1997/75)

(e) JOINT AND CO-SPONSORED UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS/ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (continued) (E/1997/63)

(i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (continued) (E/1997/3, 11, 12, 93 and 99)

Mr. T.L. DLAMINI (Observer for Swaziland) said that the King of Swaziland had officially recognized the pivotal role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in helping to sustain economic development at the national and international levels. They must, however, clarify their objectives and aim for greater transparency. It was unfortunate that those NGOs which were designed to accelerate the tempo of social development and thus further the Council's mandate were not being adequately funded while, under the guise of promoting a culture of democracy, some Governments were funding NGOs whose sole purpose was to undermine national development and destabilize legitimately elected Governments. The Council should thus monitor the activities of all NGOs and reconsider their status, in keeping with its resolution 1296 (XLIV).

He agreed with previous speakers in supporting the Country Strategy Note (CSN) as a vehicle for defining and accomplishing national aspirations for social and economic development. Not only did the CSN reflect regional and subregional concerns and national objectives, it also helped revitalize the traditional institutions so vital to a nation's uniqueness.

His delegation was in favour of proclaiming the year 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace. With a view to promoting peace between nations in the spirit of the Charter, there must be a curtailment of the sale of destructive weapons, especially to developing countries; an end to

the scramble for natural resources in the developing world; respect for dignity and equality amongst sovereign Member States; protection of the most vulnerable social sectors; and accelerated promotion of gender equality to ensure that women participated fully in national policy-making by the end of the century.

Powerful nations should stop interfering in the domestic affairs of others and exploiting their geo-economic positions at the expense of the sovereign dignity of others. No Member State should facilitate efforts to destabilize others. It was regrettable that mercenaries and hired troops had recently been allowed to unseat Governments, especially in the developing countries of Africa. If global peace was to be ensured by the year 2000, the United Nations must guarantee that the policies of national Governments were respected by all Member States.

Ms. WANG Xinxia (China) said that adequate energy supplies constituted a major dynamic force for economic growth and the improvement of living standards. The sustainable production, distribution and use of energy was a complex, global issue, requiring concerted international cooperation to achieve a comprehensive solution. United Nations system-wide coordination on energy issues must be enhanced to avoid duplication of initiatives by individual agencies. The role of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be strengthened and other agencies should be encouraged to cooperate and develop their comparative advantages. The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development should continue to take part in studies and discussions on energy issues. Reviews by the Council of the working methods of the Committee would help strengthen its functions.

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) had developed rapidly in recent years, posing a considerable threat to human life and provoking widespread international concern. Her delegation appreciated the assistance afforded to countries by the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) in creating national Theme Groups and providing core financial and technical support to national AIDS programmes. Additional financial and technical assistance must be accorded to the developing countries to facilitate inter-country networks and regional cooperation projects, particularly in countries already possessing medium- to long-term projects for the prevention and control of AIDS.

The global exchange and training of AIDS professionals must be encouraged and public awareness of AIDS raised through the schools and the mass media. The protection of women and children from the effects of the epidemic was also a priority for which coordination between the health sector and other departments was needed. Being aware that time was of the essence, her Government had implemented a range of methods at country level and was willing to cooperate with the international community in a concerted effort to devise a global strategy for the prevention and control of AIDS.

Her delegation also supported the proposal that 2001 be proclaimed the international year of volunteers, since it would provide recognition of the work carried out by international volunteers and promote worldwide awareness. She also endorsed the proposal that 2000 be proclaimed the international year of mountains in recognition of the economic and biological significance of mountain ecosystems.

Mr. MAKEEV (Observer for Kyrgyzstan), endorsing the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on progress made in the implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health (E/1997/62), said that his Government was making concerted efforts to control "harmful habits" among the population. Smoking was a social evil affecting growing numbers of people, particularly young people.

His delegation supported the initiative to proclaim 2001 the international year of volunteers and thanked members for their support of its own initiative to proclaim 2000 as the international year of mountains. Mountains covered a fifth of the earth's land mass and were home to at least 10 per cent of the world's population. An even greater proportion of the world's population made use of mountain resources such as water.

It was no coincidence that, of the 48 armed conflicts in the world in 1995, 26 had occurred in mountainous regions. An inadequacy of water and other natural resources only exacerbated poverty and led to ethnic conflict. Mountains were particularly prone to ecological disasters such as earthquakes and avalanches, which resulted in the loss of thousands of lives each year and devastated local economies. Mountain areas also had tremendous potential for tourism.

Mountains covered over 90 per cent of his country's territory and formed an essential part of the central Asian ecosystem. All too often, Governments

were faced with the need to rectify the consequences of past mistakes. United Nations assistance with drafting effective legislation and policies for protecting mountain resources would be much appreciated.

Ms. McNISH (Jamaica) said that, at a time of continued financial stringency, volunteer work was playing an increasingly significant role in delivering much-needed assistance to the developing countries. As a beneficiary of the volunteer efforts of several volunteer organizations, Jamaica could testify to their effectiveness. In partnership with the Government and the private sector at both local and national levels, volunteers had contributed to poverty eradication, to health, education, the environment and disaster relief, fostering capacity-building at all levels.

The proclamation of 2001 as the international year of volunteers would enable the international community to pay tribute to the invaluable contributions of the men and women who worked tirelessly and selflessly, often in dangerous situations, and whose work all too often went unnoticed. Her delegation had thus become a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Council (E/1997/L.24).

Mr. ACEMAH (Uganda), welcoming the report of the Executive Director of UNAIDS (E/1997/63), said that his Government was encouraged by the positive developments in the global struggle against the epidemic. It had been waging a relentless struggle against HIV/AIDS over the past decade, through the Ministry of Health and the Uganda Aids Commission, and would continue to share tools and strategies with other countries. A global epidemic demanded a global response, hence the importance of the Secretary-General's advocacy role for raising global awareness of HIV/AIDS.

UNAIDS must continue to conduct research into the economic, social and political causes and consequences of the epidemic, since knowledge was a powerful weapon. The Council should discuss the issue during its high-level segment in 1998, with a view to providing clear policy guidance to UNAIDS. It was to be hoped that the Programme would be allocated increased resources to enable it to expand the United Nations system's response at the national, regional and international levels.

Mr. IBRAHIM (Malaysia) said his Government supported the proclamation of both the international year of mountains and the international year of volunteers. In Malaysia, volunteer workers made a vital contribution

in many fields. They expected no rewards and their only return was the joy of being useful. The international year of volunteers would provide the opportunity for the world to express its appreciation of their work at a time when economic advancement risked eroding cultures of sharing and caring. Volunteer work was founded on the philosophy that people everywhere were entitled to justice and equal opportunities.

Mr. DAKA (Zambia), commending the Secretariat on its well-prepared report on HIV/AIDS (E/1997/63), welcomed the approach being adopted by the United Nations system, and called for greater advocacy on the part of the Secretary-General to help raise global awareness of the dangers of the epidemic. The complex and long-term challenge of HIV/AIDS required an expanded response. Direct health interventions concerning the immediate aspects of AIDS prevention and care must thus be intensified, and innovative action undertaken to address the broader context of the epidemic, including its socio-economic causes and consequences.

It was at country level that UNAIDS had an impact on ordinary people, hence the need for a focus on national capacity-building for a multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS. The international best practice approach had proved effective and should be encouraged.

In Zambia, UNAIDS operated through the existing resident coordinator system. An inter-agency Theme Group with the participation of government representatives was regularly convened to analyse and exchange information, provide advocacy, support the representation of NGOs and foster joint action and coordination. A Coordination Committee on HIV/AIDS, comprising representatives of the Government, the United Nations, donors and NGOs, had been established to identify the financial, material and human resources required to mitigate the impact of the virus. The Committee also sought to conduct a policy dialogue with interested parties, to maximize the utilization of limited resources, to avoid overlap and ensure that all interventions helped mitigate the epidemic and to resolve any conflicts.

There must be increased allocation of resources to support HIV/AIDS activities in those countries most affected or threatened by the epidemic. Efforts to increase mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS by relevant bodies of the United Nations system should be encouraged, as should the placement of the issue on the development agenda at the national, regional and global levels.

His delegation supported the proposal to proclaim 2001 the international years of volunteers, since it would further the objectives of the volunteers engaged in humanitarian, social and development activities throughout the world. The volunteer movement, which had contributed significantly to international cooperation for development, focused on supporting development efforts with a strong sense of local ownership. The work of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) was highly appreciated in Africa and it was to be hoped that it would continue to receive the necessary financial and political support.

Mr. JOKONYA (Observer for Zimbabwe) said that, since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, energy had emerged as a priority issue because it was one of the key factors in furthering sustainable development. The utilization of clean, safe and environmentally-friendly technologies for its production should be encouraged, and he shared the Secretary-General's concern that current energy prices favoured the development and use of conventional energy sources over renewable ones (E/1997/75, para. 9).

Zimbabwe, as Chairman of the World Solar Commission, had actively supported the UNESCO initiative on the world solar process, which sought to popularize the use of solar energy in urban and rural areas. It was important that the solar process should be supported by adequate financing and his delegation thus welcomed inter-agency coordination and cooperation in the field of energy, while regretting that the Secretary-General's report had not linked the mobilization of financial resources to the work of the inter-agency task force.

His delegation supported the idea of a high-level discussion on energy and proposed that, in looking into the possibility of such a high-level session, the Secretary-General should work in close collaboration with the regional commissions as well as other bodies of the United Nations system. The high-level discussion should take into account the existing initiatives and should call for further research into the development, application and transfer of clean and efficient technology.

His delegation would support the proposed draft resolutions on the international year for the culture of peace and the international year of volunteers.

Ms. LUHULIMA (Indonesia) endorsed the proposal that 2001 be proclaimed the international year of volunteers which would, she hoped, be adopted by consensus. Its adoption would give the international community an opportunity to recognize and pay tribute to all those who worked tirelessly for the well-being of the poor and the marginalized around the world.

Indonesia with its vast population, most of whom lived in rural and remote areas, was fully aware of the importance of volunteerism. National focal points had been established to encourage and coodinate volunteer activities and more than 100,000 Indonesians were currently working as volunteers at home and abroad. Such global problems as environmental degradation, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, made the need for voluntary efforts greater than ever.

On the question of the coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation, she said that her delegation attached importance to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), referred to in the note by the Secretary-General (E/1997/47) and agreed with some of its recommendations. However, since the topic was closely linked to the issue of reform, the Council should adopt a cautious approach to the recommendations as a whole.

Mr. PEDROSO CUESTA (Cuba) said that, while the note by the Secretary-General conveying the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (E/1997/47) contained a number of interesting recommendations, he felt that it would be premature for the Council to take note of it immediately, and suggested that it should be postponed until the resumed session. His delegation would be prepared to take note of the JIU report itself, and regretted that it was not yet available.

The recommendations regarding the future of the Tobacco or Health Programme (E/1997/62, para. 56) referred to the possible establishment of a voluntary trust fund to finance the main activities of the United Nations system focal point. He wondered whether such a suggestion was appropriate seeing that the General Assembly had already earmarked resources for the Programme. His delegation had taken note of the resolution of the forty-eighth World Health Assembly concerning an international strategy for tobacco control (annex I) and would comment upon it in due course.

Ms. NAIKER (South Africa) said that her Government was strongly committed to implementing appropriate national policies and supporting international efforts with regard to tobacco, since it was estimated that smoking-related diseases killed some 25,000 South Africans a year. It was particularly appreciative of the contribution of FAO and the World Bank to international efforts to decrease demand and supply, and strongly supported the proposal to draw up an international framework convention for tobacco control.

Her Government's new energy policy was based on equity, economy, environment and efficiency. It dealt with issues ranging from commercial energy consumption in industry, mining and commerce to the provision of energy to previously disadvantaged and rural areas. Integrated energy planning posed enormous challenges to all countries, and her delegation welcomed the reference in the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/75) on possibilities of strengthening coordination of the United Nations system in the field of energy to the desirability of developing a reference framework for the energy-related activities of the system based on a common understanding of a sustainable energy future.

Her Government was also committed to seeking solutions to the problem of HIV/AIDS and agreed with the statement in the UNAIDS Executive Director's report that efforts to address the challenges posed by the epidemic must take into account the broader issues involved (E/1997/63, para. 13).

Her delegation supported the proposal that 2000 be proclaimed the international year for the culture of peace and had become a sponsor of the draft resolution on the proclamation of 2001 as the international year of volunteers (E/1997/L.24).

Mr. KAABACHI (Tunisia) said that his Government, which was seriously considering the adoption of stringent legislation to prohibit smoking in public places and was already waging a wide-ranging campaign to convince young people of the harmful effects of smoking, considered that the future of the Tobacco or Health Programme would demand a minimal level of resources if the United Nations system was to respond effectively to all the new requests for action on the issues discussed in the report (E/1997/62).

His delegation had become a sponsor of the draft resolution on the proclamation of 2001 as the international year of volunteers, which would

constitute an appropriate recognition by the international community of the value of the devoted work performed by thousands of volunteers throughout the world, and supported the proposal that 2000 be proclaimed the international year for the culture of peace. It was studying the proposal that 2000 should also be designated the international year of thanksgiving and would make its position known in due course. It agreed with the delegation of Canada, however, regarding the need to ensure that the proclamation of international years did not lead to additional expenditure by the United Nations.

Ms. KRISHNA (India) said that her delegation had read with interest the comments by ACC (E/1997/46) on the wide range of recommendations on operational activities in the JIU report. It agreed that many of the recommendations touched on complex issues having far-reaching implications and thought that far greater intergovernmental examination and discussion was required before a consensus could emerge on those issues. The Council should proceed with caution and engage in more extensive intergovernmental discussions before providing any guidance on the recommendations.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that the presentation of the report on multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health (E/1997/62) had been very useful. The report contained a number of conclusions and recommendations, one of them with regard to the possibility of a voluntary trust fund to finance the main activities of the United Nations system focal point. It might be worthwhile for the Council to pursue that suggestion and his delegation would submit a draft decision to that effect in due course.

His delegation shared the concern expressed with regard to ACC comments on the JIU reports on coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation (E/1997/47) and the financial resources allocated by the United Nations system to NGO activities (E/1997/46). The Council needed more time to examine the recommendations in those reports before taking note of them.

His delegation would become a sponsor of the draft resolutions on the proclamation of 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace, the proclamation of 2000 as the international year of thanksgiving, and the proclamation of 2001 as the international year of volunteers.

Being well aware of Council resolution 1980/67 on the proclamation of international years and anniversaries, his delegation would follow its guidelines when submitting a proposal to the Council at its next session that 2005 be proclaimed the international year of micro-credit.

Ms. GALER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that UNICEF had been working throughout the past year to respond to the global epidemic of HIV/AIDS by engaging in joint planning, information-sharing and improved coordination at the global, regional and country levels with the other sponsors of UNAIDS. Jointly funded positions had strengthened the capacity of both UNICEF and the Programme, helping to ensure that HIV/AIDS activities were mainstreamed into traditional programming areas. The Programme had helped to accelerate the HIV/AIDS activities of UNICEF in 1996-1997 by providing "seed" funds from its core budget and the budget of the inter-agency working groups.

UNICEF would play an active role in support of the campaign for World AIDS Day and would mobilize communications activities by focusing its programming efforts on the response to such issues as the rising number of orphans and the increasing number of street children. It had also been active in developing proposals for consideration in the Coordinated Appeal process. It was working closely with the Programme to develop guidelines for voluntary and confidential counselling and testing for both women and men and had submitted project proposals on testing for consideration in respect of the 1998/99 Coordinated Appeal.

With regard to HIV and breastfeeding, UNICEF continued to advocate national solutions that best served the needs of women and children. An interim statement on HIV and infant feeding had been distributed to all field offices and UNICEF was working closely with its partners to ensure that adequate information was identified and disseminated.

At the regional level, several projects had been initiated in collaboration with the other sponsors and, at the country level, UNICEF played an active role in the development and acceleration of Theme Group activities. It was committed to helping the Theme Groups to move from basic information-sharing to joint initiatives at the country level.

Much progress had been made in joint planning and coordinated activities since the start of 1996. Though many challenges still existed, the mechanisms needed to move forward already existed within the United Nations system, including the inter-agency working groups and the Coordinated Appeal process.

Ms. COUSTE (International Association for Volunteers Effort) said that she was speaking on behalf of hundreds of thousands of volunteers who gave their skills and energies freely every day in all parts of the world to build a better life for their communities. Their work was inspired by a vision of a better world to be achieved by the preservation of natural and cultural wealth and the promotion of peace and goodwill through a joint struggle against social ills. Volunteer work was also a first step to self-knowledge and training whereby people learnt to play an active part in the life of their communities. By proclaiming 2001 the international year of volunteers, the United Nations would recognize the contribution that volunteers had already made to such special topics as the elderly, the handicapped, human rights and the environment. For many countries, volunteerism was the key to sustained economic and social development and to democracy.

Her organization was prepared to cooperate to the full with all bodies of the United Nations system to ensure maximum publicity for the international year. It intended to hold its biennial World Conference at the beginning of 2001 and to conclude the year with regional conferences on each continent and would work in partnership with its members to increase the number of new volunteers throughout the world.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.